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A CHRISTMAS IDYL.

I.

In solemn council sat the Gods.
From Kolob's height supreme,
Celestial light blazed forth afar
O'er countless Kokaubeam.
Reflected whence fell radiant gleams
Of that resplendent day,
Far down the dark abysmal realm
Where Earth in chaos lay.

Rapt silence reigned. The hour was one
When Thought doth most avail.
The destiny of worlds unborn
Hung trembling in the scale.
A hush profound—and there uprose,
Those Kings and Priests among,
A Pow'r sublime, than whom appeared
None mightier 'mid the throng.

A stature mingling strength and grace,
Of meek though godlike mien,
The lustre of whose countenance
Outshone the noonday sheen.
The hair was white as purest foam,
Or frost of Alpine hill.
He spake—attention grew more grave—
The stillness e'en more still.

"Father!"—the voice like music fell,
Clear as the murmuring flow
Of mountain streamlet, trickling down
From heights of virgin snow—
"Father," it said, "since One must die
Thy children to redeem,
Whilst Earth—as yet unformed and void—
With pulsing life shall teem;

“And thou, great Michael, foremost fall
That mortal man may be,
And chosen Savior yet must send,
Lo, here am I, send me!
I ask—I seek no recompense,
Save that which then were mine;
Mine be the willing sacrifice,
The endless glory—Thine!”

He ceased and sat; when sudden rose
Aloft a towering Form,
Proudly erect as lowering peak
That looms above the storm.
A Presence bright and beautiful,
With eye of flashing fire,
A lip whose haughty curl bespoke
A sense of inward ire.

“Give me to go,” he boldly cried,
With scarce concealed disdain,
“And none shall hence, from Heav’n to Earth,
That shall not rise again.
My saving plan exception scorns—
Man’s agency unknown.
As recompense—I claim the right
To sit on yonder Throne!”

Ceased Lucifer. The breathless hush
Resumed and denser grew.
All eyes were turned—the general gaze
One common magnet drew.
A moment there was solemn pause—
Then, like the thunder-burst,
Rolled forth from lips Omnipotent,
The words: “I’LL SEND THE FIRST!”

’Twas done. From congregation vast,
Tumultuous murmurs rose—
Waves of conflicting sound, as when
Two meeting seas oppose.
’Twas finished—but the heavens wept—
And still their annals tell
How God’s elect was chosen Christ,
O’er One who fighting fell.

II.

A stranger star o'er Bethlehem
 Shot down its silver ray
 Where, cradled in a manger's fold,
 A sleeping infant lay.
 Whilst, guided by that finger bright,
 The Orient sages bring
 Rare gifts of myrrh and frankincense
 To hail the new-born King.

Oh wondrous grace! Will Gods go down
 Thus low that men may rise?
 Imprisoned here that Mighty One
 Who reigned in yonder skies?
 E'en so. Time's trusty horologe
 Now chimes the hour of Noon—
 A dying world is welcoming
 The Godhead's gracious boon.

He wandered through the faithless world,
 A Prince in shepherd's guise;
 He called his scattered flock, but few
 The Voice would recognize;
 For minds upborne by hollow pride,
 Or dimmed by sordid lust,
 Ne'er look for kings in beggar's garb—
 For diamonds in the dust.

He wept o'er doomed Jerusalem,
 Her temples, walls and towers;
 O'er palaces where recreant priests
 Usurped unhallowed powers.
 "I am the Way of Life and Light!"
 Alas! 'twas heeded not—
 Ignored Salvation's message, spurned
 The wondrous truths He taught.

O bane of damning unbelief!
Thou source of lasting strife!
Thou stumbling-stone, thou barrier 'thwart
The gates of Endless Life!
O love of self and Mammon's lust!
Twin portals to Despair—
Where Bigotry, the blinded bat,
Flaps through the midnight air!

Through these, gloom-wrapt Gethsemane!
Thy glens of guilty shade
Wept o'er the sinless Son of God,
By gold-bought kiss betrayed;
Beheld him unresisting dragged—
Forsaken, friendless, lone,
To halls where dark-browed Hatred sat
On Judgment's lofty throne.

As sheep before His shearers, dumb,
Those patient lips were mute;
The clamorous charge of taunting tongues
He deigned not to dispute.
They smote with cruel palm His face—
Which felt, but scorned the sting—
They crowned with thorns His quivering brow,
Then, mocking, hailed Him "King!"

On Calvary's hill they crucified
The God whom worlds adore!
"Father, forgive them!"—Drained the dregs—
Immanuel was no more.
No more where thunders rocked the earth,
Where lightnings, 'thwart the gloom,
Saw that unconquered Spirit spurn
The shackles of the tomb!

Far flashing on its wings of light—
A falchion from its sheath—
It cleft the realms of Darkness, and
Dissolved the bands of Death.
Hell's dungeons burst! Wide open swung
The everlasting bars,
Whereby the ransomed soul shall win
Those heights beyond the stars.

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O. F. Whitney.